Farmer Walnut Hills May 27. 45

My Dear Son

Yours of May 3. Was duly received but in the multitude of Duties and Pursuits obliged to wait its turn — It is difficult to settle abstract principles seperate from the attending circumstances for there may be many things lawful which are not expedient — & never perhaps is this the case than in church difficulties & divisions — when often to prefer the right ~~must~~ may be to let the Church go — I suppose the General Assembly have long since refused to settle abstract questions seperate from the circumstances to which they relate — Seems of course only in the last suggestion can advice be given as relevant to the subject having Their application to direct self in the light of circumstances —

By "Church Souely" I understand. ~~This~~ of the Church for incorporation for Ecclesiastical purposes — with power to affect taxes according to the valuation of Law of the church members here & those not — The question then is has the church a right to levy & enforce payment

The Jewish mint by church discipline
The following facts should be whatever seems relevant to the subject
The first fact to be noted is that the ~~Jewish~~ Jewish church is no example
in respect to the Christian church -
Being the Church & State united by divine
constitution & adopted by the suffrage of the
nation. & of course bound by express Divine
authority & by covenant to pay the appointed
taxation
2 The Primitive Christian Ch. ~~was~~ was
was wholly a society of Spiritual Christian men
without any civil relation by God appointment
but wholly a Kingdom not of this world
3. From the beginning till the time of
Constantine the was wholly a voluntary
association & her ministry sustained by voluntary contributions
Even an appeal to Pagan civil government
for the redress of wrongs among themselves
was severely reprehended.
4 The Colonial Puritan Churches of New England did for sometime support the
ministry by voluntary contribution
From ~~These facts~~ The evidence is to my mind satisfactory that the church is in its organization is wholly a voluntary institution - dependent on the contributions of its members -
for the support of the ministry

5 Voluntary contributions as a general rule must be at the direction of the Donor & not at the dictation of the Church to be enforced by discipline — I come under the head of what Paley calls imperfect obligation which no law civil or ecclesiastical can enforce.

The right of the Church to exact any specific amount of charity is disclaimed by Peter in the case of Ananias "While it remained (unsold) was it not thine own & after it was sold was it not in thine own power" No one was compelled to sell & give all or any particular sum subscribed on the contrary. 2 Cor IX. 7 "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give not grudgingly nor of necessity for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver"

Whine churches are incorporated & agree to raise their expenses by a tax on the civil list. it is lawful to do so & is obligatory they have agreed to do so as any judgment voluntarily made is obligatory but if some members do not belong to the corporation the vote of the majority cannot take away the natural liberty of each member to give the way & the amount his own judgment dictates. So also where a Church members a civil & ecclesiastical society & the majority vote to raise a sum on the civil list the minority are bound by the vote because the will of a majority

in the known rule of civic associations - & agreed
that an meaning members ---
But the spiritual relations agreed to may create
obligation - & the refusal - may be a sin -- &
civil or ecclesiastical law inforce payment
if it ever was in the best times of New England
practicable & expedient Then to collect - It is
doubtfull whether in any case in our day it
would be expedient -- Because the kingdom of Xt is
spiritual. & the members in such as in the truth
of xt the people are bound to seek peace &
harmony & brotherly love & things by which
one may edify another & be subject one to
another in the Lord & one ignorant to raise
money - may prevent the good influence of
the Gospel ministry for years & sometimes
destroy almost the church ---
There was a case in Litchfield perhaps like yours -
The new Constitution affected bank Stock & ~~made~~
Rhind trebled the ministerial taxe of Mr Deming
he offered to make his ~~tax~~ considerable
sum refused to pay the assessment -- the next
year his property was so distributed among
his children - that he successfully remonstrated
& the Society ~~voted~~ the taxes ever since
with great advantage -
Cases may exist however in which a man

ought to pay his tax the Rum were no legal obligation. So Christ paid tribute to the Roman Government he says "lest we should offend them" and many a man I doubt not has refused on the ground of legal right to do [illegible] when his moral obligation to prevent confusion & misunderstanding dishonorable to the Lord was most imperious—

I conclude however that it is the duty of the members of the church unanimously to give several cordially to aid in supporting the ministry of the Gospel. & that a refusal to do any thing may be so flagrantly wrong as to vacate the evidence of christian character. & ~~neglect the duty of~~ the church to clear herself from the disgrace of such a member But in my judgment it would be as a matter of clearing themselves and in the collection of money — In where circumstances & honor & a regard to the cause of Christ will not exclude a man who is able to contribute anything or to small a sum as compared with his ability renders it an insult unfeeling & donation Discipline will find probably a hard customer what— religious influence would take from him as much as his regular tax would be worth

Our Presbyterian Church say that the members of the church are bound to contribute for the support of the Gospel But I have never known a case of discipline for the a total refusal or a too small contribution I do not know that such Lugges have will hit your case at all. But they can understand all that I think of in this light on the subject. May God guide the church by his own pure unerring rule and finally reward my poverty & folly in mercy & good deeds.

As you have invited my interest on this subject from your letter & asked me to brush up my mind to think somewhat on the subject I think I may reasonably claim as my fee that you favor me in due time with an answer as to how you get along & make it an occasion of letting me hear how you & your family do & where your Father & Mother my Good friends Landon are & how they do And remember old Mrs Ingram & Gracie a little over old friend Hope May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all & your children

In the earnest prayer of your friend

Lyman Beecher

July 9 - 1848.

P.S. The tobacco was inserted according to date. & somehow mss code & I supposed it was sent with assembly — Love to you all —

L B

B. F Langdon, Esqr

Castleton

Vermont